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JAMES J. SMITH:

Adventures in the Wrong House.

BY MR. D. MONTGOMERY, PH.D.

Editor of the Democratic Sentinel.

I know not what extraordinary conjunction

of the stars took place on the first

of June, 1832, nor how my planet

in particular, came to perform so many

in or out of its proper sphere. Before

that I had never had an adventure in my

life, the current of my existence had flowed

evenly and quietly as the stream of a mill

pond; and so, with no other aid, I could

have spun out my biography beyond

the compass of a single paragraph. I was

born and lived for twenty-five years—that

is all: I lived in a village, too, and my

name was (and now is) James J. Smith.

There was nothing further in my history

worthy of being mentioned, except at twenty

years old, finding myself unaccountably

by my relatives, and possessed of a moderate

estate sufficient for all my reasonable

wants. (I had no reasonable ones.) I

began to weary of my father and my

existence, and cast about for some means

of relief. It was a balance of great

things, the object of matrimony; but

indeed, in a very general way, I was not

in love with anybody, or any particular

place; when a letter from my old college-mate

and correspondent, Henry Brown, Virginia,

determined me in favor of the former. He

was just forming a family party to a trip

to Niagara, which party he invited me to

join in Philadelphia, where he expected to

join in an early day; and he promised to

bring along with him a very charming

cousin of his, who might perhaps, he said,

assist me in my journey, as soon as I

got tired of traveling, provided only

that I had the spirit (and it required great

spirit) to go with him, all of which I re-

garded as a friendly pliancy on the part

of my old classmate.

I went accordingly to Philadelphia and

staid at my father's house, looking at a

fine old building house, which he had

intended stopping, and where I designed to

staid. It was on Friday, in the afternoon,

that I arrived, and having established

myself in a comfortable chamber, I sailed

out to see some of the city, and inquired

at the post office for letters from my friend.

I received two letters, one from Henry of

a somewhat mysterious quality; the other from

a stranger and of a character still more in-

explicable; both of them written from Bal-

timore. Henry informed me that he was on

the way with his party, hoped to be in Phila-

delphia the following day; and he added (and

this was the mysterious part of his letter),

that his father, a handsome man, was about

to be snatched away from me by a peculiar

fatality; yet he did not despair, he said, of my

yet winning her, provided he should im-

mediately find out the name of the girl, and

find me with a nettle sufficient to under-

take a most formidable but splendid adven-

ture. (Confound his handsome cousin!

I said, "What I need here is of before, ex-

cept in his last letter; and I found his friend

adventurer! And with that, with the

greatest quantity, I finished the memory

of both, to examine and wonder over the

second letter from my unknown correspond-

ent. It was as follows:

My Dear Boy:—Should be in Philadelphia

Friday evening with E.—to sign, seal,

and seal and square according to compact, pre-

arrangement. Shall expect you—stings,

poison, blisters, and hysterics. Always prom-

ised your dad I would, and I will. Yours,

respectfully, T. B.

This letter was formerly directed to James

J. Smith, a Philadelphia boy, who was

in the city, and who was to be married

as far as could be gathered, to a girl

of his own age, and of a broken expression

between E.—(who is she?) on the one

part, and Mr. James J. Smith, on the other.

But who was Mr. James J. Smith? No

angel, certainly, who had never dreamed

of marriage, except as a contingency, and

had never made serious love or proposals to

any human being. (Now it was apparent—

this was confirmed by the allusion to the

"forementioned place," well known of

course to the person written to, but not to

me—that there was some other James J.

Smith, beside myself, in the world, and in

Philadelphia, for whom this letter was de-

signed, and to whom it was manifest from

the terms of it, the last might prove ex-

ceedingly inconvenient.)

Under these circumstances, I perceived

I had nothing to do but return the letter

to the post office, and to the address of the

office, that it might reach my unknown

friend, and I was relieved of my steps for that purpose.

When I was interrupted by a gentleman,

but I thought there was something unpleas-

ing, and singular in his looks, who stepped

up to me, saying he believed he had the

pleasure of addressing Mr. James J. Smith!

"That is certainly my name," said I.

"You haven't the honor of my acquaint-

ance," interrupted the gentleman. "Ex-

actly so, but I have the pleasure of pro-

ducing you to the gentleman."

"And with that, the fellow clapping

one hand on my shoulder in a very impudent

familiar way, displayed under my nose, not

a note of introduction, but a note of hand,

for some seven or eight hundred dollars,

drawn in favor of Simon somebody, I

forgot who, and signed, plainly and strong-

ly enough, James J. Smith.

"All this my friend," said the person,

with his hand on my shoulder, as I was

good and fair enough. The difficulty is,

that it concerns some other James J. Smith,

and not me. I never wrote that note; nor

indeed, any other. You have made a mis-

take."

"Very facetious, sir," said the person.

"I should inform you, sir, that poor Sim-

on, being in difficulty, was under the necessity

of putting up that little note to me, sir,

and I paid it for him, sir, because it was

was debt of honor, sir; and the man

looked as if he meant to impress me with

an awful sense of his courage and deter-

mination. A debt of honor, sir. I never did

difficultly in collecting."

"The device take you and your debt of

honor, sir," said the person. "I tell

you, sir, but my gentleman's interest in

me is not to be trifled with."

"I don't intend to trouble you, sir," said the

person, "but I know of a way to get you

out of this, sir, if you don't come along,

and the right going lady with him, the

family resemblance between all its

very perplexing to a stranger. Yet I

thought I was keeping the run of the streets,

notwithstanding the various doublings,

and by, I was sure that a large house,

now in sight, was my boarding house, be-

cause it looked exactly like it, and was

similarly situated near an alley, which, (or

one of the perfect few of it) I had taken

notice of during the day.

As I came near the house, I found myself

cut off from the door by some persons who

were running from the opposite direction

to me. I therefore plunged down the

alley, which was badly lighted, and soon

conducted me to another still darker one

bounding the yards of gardens, which were

merely enclosed with walls and fences, with

a garden gate to each house. The idea

struck me that I might, perhaps, enter the

boarding house through the garden gate,

which I knew must be the second beyond

the alley. I tried the latch—it did not

yield, and upon my rushing in, it was im-

mediately closed again and bolted behind me;

and this I was certain, without my having

been seen from without, for none of my pur-

suers had got into the alley. Beside the

gate was a small, dark, and narrow

passage, which I knew must be the second

beyond the alley, and I was under a sudden

impulse, and with the idea of pushing

the treacherous chambermaid, that, as I stepped

out, I closed and locked the door, for I felt

the key was on the outside, and so left her

and Jimmy to settle their difficulties as they

might.

I felt along the passage for the third door,

which I had no doubt led into my chamber.

I reached it and was in the act of scratching

about with my fingers for the knob, when

the door was opened and by my unutterable

blunder, I was seized upon by a young

female, who drew me immediately in, and

closing the door, said, with a voice broken

by emotion—

"How quick you are! All dressed so

soon! What an immense big boy you make!

Where did you get those magnificent whisk-

ers?"

It was now that the idea first burst upon

me, that I had got in the wrong house, for

I saw at a glance this was none of my

chamber. It was a lady's boudoir, or ante-

room, and I was in the act of entering

it, when I was seized upon by a young

female, who drew me immediately in, and

closing the door, said, with a voice broken

by emotion—